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ABSTRACT

This issue of "Changing Schools" focuses on character education. The lead article, "Character Education: Finding Ways To Foster Ethical Behavior in Youth" by Diane McIntyre Wilber discusses the character education programs that have spread to nearly every type of school, whether public, private, charter, or faith-based. Since 1996, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded more than \$25 million in character education seed money to 36 states and the District of Columbia. The programs of five recipients of these funds in the region served by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) are profiled. "Universities and Communities in the Region Emphasize Ethics" by Diane McIntyre Wilber highlights recent actions in the field of character education by one college of education and one community in the McREL region. "Mentoring Program 'Inducts' New Teachers" by Paula Wenger describes the new teacher program in a Nebraska school district. A special section describes some recent research results and products from McREL. "Work Force Study Reveals the Importance of Soft Skills" by Paula Wenger describes a study of qualities such as responsibility, dedication, and the ability to work with teams as ("soft skills") in the workplace. (SLD)

Changing Schools

(Character Education)

September 2000 Edition

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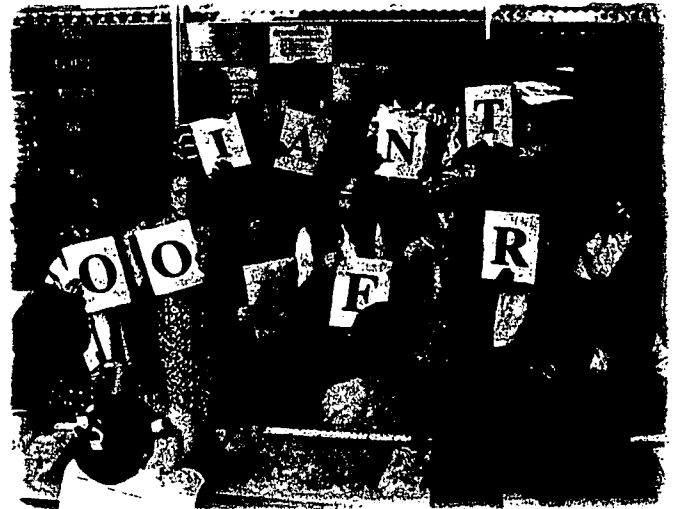
Character education:

Finding ways to foster ethical behavior in youth

by Diane McIntyre Wilber

Nationwide, a variety of voices are calling on schools to actively develop integrity in students. Businesses want workers who not only excel academically, but who also are honest, cooperative, and hardworking. Schools are alarmed at students' risky behaviors, and parents are worried they cannot counter all the dangers facing children today. As community members have come together to vocalize their concerns, formal character education programs have spread to nearly every type of school—public, private, charter, or faith-based.

The very term "character" in education once caused alarm among Americans who feared promoting a singular religious ideology in public schools. Character education is now viewed, however, as an integrated, intentional effort to help students understand, develop, and use commonly accepted ethical values such as honesty, respect, and responsibility. It is not intended to replace teaching values in the home but to reinforce the core values embraced by families, communities, and the nation. "Clearly we can all agree about the importance of teaching our children, both as individuals and as members of society, the



Elementary school students cooperate to spell out "cooperation." Through Cooperating School Districts' CHARACTERplus™ program, educators are finding a multitude of ways to bring character education to life for their students.

importance of common values . . ." remarked U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley. Indeed, a leading national non-partisan coalition, Character Education Partnership (CEP), advocates a broad-based approach for identifying and defining a community's common ground values to be reinforced in its local schools.

Historically, support for character education in public schools has fluctuated. Largely abandoned in the turbulent 1960s, it resurfaced in the 1970s through values clarification instruction. By the mid-1980s, educators denounced values clarification, but many schools implemented drug-free and sex education programs instead. Those families opposing these programs spoke out, contending their parental rights were being jeopardized. Then in the 1990s—as the public

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furor died down and incidents of school violence grabbed the headlines—the pendulum swung again. With this renewed interest, came more federal support.

Missouri coalition leads the way

Local coalitions experienced varying success. One of the first and now the largest is in St. Louis, Missouri. Begun in 1988, the coalition—originally known as Personal Responsibility Education Process (PREP)—was the brainchild of Sanford McDonnell, chairman emeritus of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation. McDonnell enlisted the help of seven local superintendents and that of Cooperating School Districts, an already established educational consortium. These initial PREP members laid the groundwork for growth; today there are 34 member districts in the St. Louis area alone, involving about 250,000 students. Now known as CHARACTERplus™, more than 50 area businesses and foundations support it.

Because each district works with its community to develop a character education curriculum and program that meets its unique needs, no two CHARACTERplus™ programs are exactly alike. Instead, there are commonalities in their shared approach:

- Identify core values,
- Infuse them into a school's curriculum and culture,
- Provide staff development, and
- Evaluate student behaviors.

Support spreads in the central states

Since 1996, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded more than \$25 million in character education seed money to 36 states and the District of Columbia. These Partnerships in Character Education Pilot Project programs help states and school districts develop curriculum materials, provide

teacher training, gauge and build community consensus on common values, and integrate the program into the curriculum. The grants are renewable over five years, up to a total of \$1 million.

Five recipients in McREL's region are: Missouri, Colorado, North Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska.

◆ In 1997, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education obtained \$240,000 to pilot Show-Me Missouri CHARACTERplus™. Now in the program's fourth year, over 28 schools in 17 districts statewide participate. Additionally, grant partners produce and disseminate character education guides and materials.

For more information, contact Program Director Linda McKay at (800) 478-5684 or visit the CHARACTERplus™ Web site at <http://info.csd.org/staffdev/chared/characterplus.html>

◆ In 1998, the Colorado Department of Education received a \$251,219 grant in partnership with Denver Public Schools and Friends of Character Education, a group of concerned civic and business leaders. Each of 10 elementary schools identified character traits they wanted to infuse into the curriculum. Implementation began in 1999; this fall the process expands to Denver middle or high schools that volunteer to participate. *For more information, contact David Smith, Colorado Department of Education, (303) 866-6683.*

◆ North Dakota, in May 1999, garnered \$350,000 in start-up money. Thirteen local coalitions throughout the state are guiding their schools through a comprehensive, ethnically and racially inclusive program. Through distance education technologies, the state Department of Public Instruction will

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Universities and communities in the region emphasize ethics

by Diane McIntyre Wilber

Recent actions by one college of education and one community in McREL's region are highlighted here.

South Dakota

Faculty of Dakota State University's (DSU) College of Education in Madison, South Dakota, are addressing the character issue. Two areas sparked concern: (1) a perception by faculty that preservice students are reflecting some disturbing trends in societal values, and (2) heightened expectations by the state Board of Regents regarding teacher quality.

"We know our graduates will be dealing with impressionable children in their classrooms, so it has to be articulated that our students must model good character," said Mark Hawkes, DSU professor of Instructional Technology.

To instill professional integrity, DSU previously set these requirements:

- Completion of 30 hours of community service,
- Successful completion of an educational psychology course, and
- Successful completion of a course teaching the integration of values into classroom practice.

Beginning this fall, the College of Education also will require students to sign an Expectations for Professional Conduct code stating they will strive toward a high standard of conduct while in college and later as teachers. The code clarifies, for example, that students working in groups must share the responsibilities equally and "foster group harmony." DSU will evaluate the long-term effectiveness of this program and measure the code's impact on teaching experiences by surveying alumni and principals across the state.

For more information, contact Mark Hawkes at (605) 256-5177 or e-mail Mark.Hawkes@dsu.edu

Wyoming

How does a public school board respond when a Catholic priest asks to teach an ethics course at the local high school? That's exactly what Father Pete Johnson of Sacred Heart Church in Greybull, Wyoming, did last June.

Father Pete, a self-proclaimed firm believer in the separation of church and state, said he was "very concerned about the lack of basic ethical standards in America" like honesty, respect, and responsibility. School board members in this rural community of 1,600 agreed that something needed to be done but were concerned about fairness to all religions.

So Father Pete called for a communitywide conference to discuss the need for character education in the schools. Response was very supportive. A 12-member volunteer coalition, comprised of clergymen from a variety of faiths, parents, a high school teacher, and other community leaders, joined Father Pete to study the issue.

After a year of discourse and study of several approaches, the coalition agreed on a program called Acquiring Ethical Guidelines for Individual Self-Governance (AEGIS). It will recommend to the school board that a character education curriculum, such as AEGIS, be implemented in grades K-12 and will monitor its impact.

For more information, contact Father Pete Johnson at (307) 765-2438.

Resources:

Character Counts! Coalition, 4640 Admiralty Way, Suite 1001, Marina Del Ray, CA 90292, (310) 306-1868; www.charactercounts.org

Partnership In Character Education Pilot Project Program, U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Washington, D.C. <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ORAD/fie.html>

Kessler, R. (2000). *The Soul of Education: Helping Students Find Connection, Compassion, and Character at School*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lickona, T., Schaps, E., & Lewis, C. (n.d.). *Eleven Principles of Effective Character Education* [Videotape]. (Available from Technomic Publishing Company, Inc., 851 New Holland Avenue, Box 3535, Lancaster, PA 17604).

Mentoring program 'inducts' new teachers

by Paula Wenger

The Ralston School District hired 34 new teachers last year — about 15 percent of its 240-teacher work force. Faced with a teacher shortage throughout Nebraska, Ralston competes with higher salaries in the surrounding metropolitan Omaha area by recruiting and hiring earlier. This year, to retain the new hires, Ralston also established a mentoring program.

Mentoring for Ralston's 15 first-year teachers was funded by the state lottery through the Mentor Teacher Program and the Education Innovation Fund administered by the state Department of Education. A mentoring teacher is paid \$500, 50 percent of the \$1,000 awarded to a school per first-year teacher. Realizing the need to mentor both first-year and newly hired but experienced teachers, the district decided to fund mentoring for its 19 entering but experienced teachers as well.

According to Janell Shain, program coordinator, mentoring in Ralston is not only an orientation to the district, but also "an induction into the profession, into the role of a

teacher . . . and what that means outside the classroom—how to be a contributing member to this learning community."

Multi-faceted program ensures success

Ralston's program design for both first-year and experienced teachers follows the guidelines for the state Mentor Teacher Program. The program's three components are group work, individual action plans, and evaluation.

Group work

For all new teachers mentored in Ralston, the district provides

- A booklet of time lines, activities, resources, and contacts;
- Ongoing training;
- Support sessions for mentors focusing on the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM), a model identifying the stages of the change process; and
- Support sessions for new teachers on classroom management strategies, parent-teacher conferences, etc.

Individual action plans

Mentor pairs develop action plans for each new teacher, which include

- Goals based on a needs assessment of the new teacher;
- Structured contacts between the mentor and the new teacher, including classroom observations;
- Visitations to other classrooms in the district and outside of the district to see other teachers in action; and
- Conferences to be attended by first-year teachers.

Evaluation

The first evaluation report, produced in summer 2000, drew from the following information:

- Benchmark data collected around the CBAM sequence,



Lynn Carlson, left, and Susan Lackson are paired up at Wildewood Elementary School as part of the mentoring program in Ralston, Nebraska. The program presents the perfect opportunity for teachers to share educational philosophies and ideas. (Photo provided courtesy of the Ralston Recorder.)

McREL policy briefs

Raising the Achievement of Low-Performing Students, by Bryan Goodwin, synthesizes seven papers from experts on diversity issues, identifies causes of marginalized students' low performance, and proposes solutions. (2000)

8 pages\$5

Rural Schools: Diverse Needs Call for Flexible Policies, by Michael L. Arnold, looks at the pros and cons of consolidation, the most divisive issue in rural school reform, and disputes two commonly held assumptions about school size. (2000)

8 pages\$5

These publications also are available on McREL's Web site at www.mcrel.org

Leadership Folio Series: Guiding Comprehensive School Reform

This folio series is designed for school leaders—particularly superintendents and principals—as they begin the process of comprehensive school reform. The series is organized around eight issues that are essential elements of any successful program and can be used to initiate discussion, guide planning, or conduct review sessions.

The folios contain guidance and suggestions for engaging the support of teachers and staff; involving family and community members in the life of the school; and using outside consultants, assistance providers, and other sources of external technical support. Tips for creating worthwhile professional development activities, aligning resources to better support program design and implementation, and evaluating progress toward goals and benchmarks are included.

In addition, these eight folios address all nine requirements for programs funded under the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) initiative and will be particularly helpful to sites participating in the CSRD program.

8 foliosfree while supplies last

To order: Resource Center, McREL, 2550 S. Parker Rd., Ste. 500, Aurora, CO 80014-1678; phone (303) 337-0990; fax (303) 337-3005; e-mail: info@mcrel.org

Classrooms Under Construction: Integrating Student-Centered Learning with Technology



This 24-minute videotape, from Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), portrays students, teachers, and principals from culturally diverse schools across the Southwest as they construct learner-centered classrooms using technology. It depicts the stages and strategies needed to make the transition from the traditional teacher-centered classroom to a different, more creative learning environment. Through learner-centered professional development activities, teachers have the opportunity to experience for themselves the power of learning in this manner. (2000)

Videotape, Product ID TEC-28\$15

To order: SEDL Product Catalog, 2111 East 7th St., Austin, TX 78701-3281; phone (800) 476-6861; fax (512) 476-2286; e-mail: www.sedl.org/pubs/welcome.html; Web site: www.sedl.org

Growing Toward Systemic Change: Developing Personal Learning Plans at Montpelier High School



at Brown

The Montpelier story is an excerpted chapter from an upcoming book titled *Dynamics of Change*, produced by the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB) at Brown University. It describes how one public high school adopted an innovative structure featuring personal learning plans for all students.

The author of *Dynamics of Change*, David Gibson, is one of several researchers who studied Montpelier's rippling changes over a period of six years, tracing the flow of events and searching for patterns of activities that supported growing reform. The result is a portrait of one school's process of creating a successful and self-propelling structure. (2000)

20 pagesfree

To order: LAB, 222 Richmond St., Ste. 300, Providence, RI 02903-4226; phone (800) 521-9550; fax (401) 421-7650; e-mail: publications@brown.edu; Web site: www.lab.brown.edu

Roots & Wings: Effects of Whole-School Reform on Student Achievement

This report from the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk describes the Roots & Wings program, presents the research on the program carried out to date, and discusses the implications of this process of research, development, and evaluation for school reform in general. Roots & Wings is a whole-school reform model incorporating all major subjects and including the assessment component of Success for All, the most widely used of the earlier reform models. The Success for All model is limited to the areas of reading, writing, and language arts; Roots & Wings is an expanded program including mathematics, science, and social studies.

Report No.36\$7.50

Available online at www.csos.jhu.edu/crespar/reports

To order: Attn: Diane Diggs, Distribution Coordinator, CSOS, 3003 N. Charles St., Ste. 200, Baltimore, MD 21218; phone (410) 516-8808; fax (410) 516-8890; Web site: www.csos.jhu.edu

Improving Reading: Southeastern School Strategies

SERVE

This publication by the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) is meant for educators who are committed to and excited about helping benchmark their school's efforts to improve reading. It summarizes what a team of SERVE colleagues learned from visits to 18 schools endorsed as having strong reading programs. A list of the schools visited is provided so that readers can personalize their benchmarking experience by contacting these schools and comparing progress notes on programs and reading improvement efforts.

The publication is part of a series of products designed to address the improvement of reading literacy in the Southeast. The series includes a video magazine on *Leading Change in Literacy* and a case study of two district-designed reading programs. (1998)

36 pages, Code: SSIRS.\$6

To order: SERVE Publishing and Quality Assurance, Attn: Distribution Specialist, 1203 Governor's Square Blvd., Ste. 400, Tallahassee, FL 32301; phone (800) 352-6001; fax (850) 671-6001; Web site: www.serve.org

When the Journey Is Its Own Reward: Supporting National Board Candidates

WestEd

The certification process of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is a powerful form of professional development and likely to result in improved teaching—especially when coupled with appropriate candidate support. This knowledge brief, designed to help professional developers, distills information from seven diverse candidate support programs. For teachers, this WestEd publication offers a sense of what the certification process entails—in commitment and benefits—and the kind of support to expect. (2000)

16 pages, item No KN-00-02.....\$6

Available online from WestEd at www.wested.org/wested/pubs/online/certbrief2.pdf

Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Schools with Model Professional Development

What does it take to translate teacher professional development into impressive learning gains for students? A research study of eight schools that won the U.S. Department of Education's National Award for Model Professional Development has been distilled into this brief report of successful school reform. The report by WestEd profiles each school's journey, spells out guiding principles that researchers identified across these disparate sites, and includes annotated lists of resources for putting these principles into practice. (2000)

76 pages, order No. PD-00-01..... \$9.95

To order: Attn: Publications, WestEd, 730 Harrison St., San Francisco, CA 94107-1242; phone (415) 615-3144; fax (415) 512-2204; e-mail: tross@WestEd.org; Web site: www.wested.org

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The following Policy Briefs are available online at www.mcrel.org/products/policy-briefs

Raising the Achievement of Low-Performing Students (2000)

Rural Schools: Diverse Needs Call for Flexible Policies (2000)

Standards-Based Accountability Systems (2000)

High-Stakes Testing: Trends and Issues (2000)


Improving Teacher Quality: Issues and Policies (1999)

The Impact of Technology on Learning: Making Sense of the Research (1999)

Guide to Working With Model Providers (2000) 

by Katie Walter and Bryan C. Hassel, Public Impact, Regional Educational Laboratory Network; 63 pagesfree while supplies last

Including At-Risk Students in Standards-Based Reform: A Report on McREL's Diversity Roundtable II (2000)

by McREL, 74 pages.....  \$15

Leadership Folio Series: Guiding Comprehensive School Reform (2000) 

by McREL, 8 foliosfree while supplies last

Leadership for School Improvement (2000) 

(Also available at www.mcrel.org/products/school-improve/leadership.asp)

by McREL, 22 pages\$10

A Distillation of Significant Subject-Matter Content from Selected State Standards Documents in the Subject Areas of Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science (1999)

by McREL, 68 pages\$15

Evaluating for Success: An Evaluation Guide for Districts and Schools (1999)

(Also available at www.mcrel.org/products/school-improve/csrd-eval.asp)

by Louis F. Cicchinelli and Zoe Barley, 53 pages free while supplies last

Professional Development: Learning From the Best/A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on Model Professional Development Award Winners (1999)

(Also available at www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit/htm)

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Noteworthy Perspectives on Comprehensive School Reform (1999)

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by McREL, soft cover \$5

A Theory-Based Meta-Analysis of Research on Instruction (1998)

(Also available at www.mcrel.org/products/learning/meta.asp)

by Robert Marzano, bound booklet \$20

Improving Classroom Assessment: A Toolkit for Professional Developers - Toolkit98 (1998)

by Judy Arter and the Classroom Assessment Team, Laboratory Network Program

two three-ring binders\$66.50

Analysis and Identification of Basic Words in Grades K-6 (1998)

by Robert Marzano, John Kendall, and Diane Paynter, bound booklet\$11.25

AROUND THE REGION

Continued from Page 4

- Progress in individual action plans, and
- The number of new teachers retained.

During the past year, only one first-year teacher left Ralston for a higher salary in a nearby district. Two experienced teachers also went to other districts. None left the profession. Shain credited the mentor program: "We retained over 30 new teachers who could have looked at the metro area for higher paying positions but didn't."

New teachers join the learning community

To address waves of retirement expected in the foreseeable future, Ralston will continue the program. For other districts beginning a similar program, Ralston offers this advice:

- Select your best teachers to be mentors (see side bar);
- Assign a mentor in the building;
- Increase meeting opportunities for mentors and new teachers by using substitute teachers;
- Plan mentor group activities around the differences between elementary and

secondary education, while retaining the interaction critical to continuity for students;

- Sustain mentoring support for teachers during their probationary period through training and substitute support; and
- Fast track experienced teachers into involvement in the district's learning community.

According to Shain, the mentor program integrates well with the district's action research teams, learning study teams, and informal support. "Our vision," said Shain, "is that teachers are as much of a learning community as we expect students to be."

For information on the Nebraska Mentor Teacher Program, visit www.nde.state.ne.us/EEC/grantinfo/grants.html#Mentor. For more information on the Ralston School District mentoring program, contact Janell Shain at (402) 331-6475 or e-mail jshain@esu3.org

Traits of a good mentor candidate:

According to Janell Shain, who coordinates the mentor program in Nebraska's Ralston district, "Mentors are taught to coach, not to clone themselves." Ralston looks for mentors who

- Have taught successfully for five years,
- Know learning and instruction,
- Work well with other adults,
- Will honor confidentiality about the performance of the new teacher, and
- Will cultivate positive attitudes and approaches.

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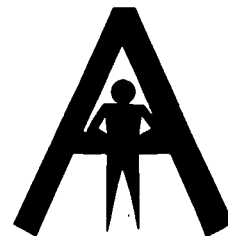
Sacramento, Calif.: Sept. 18 – 20, 2000 (includes Colorado and Wyoming from McREL's region)

Louisville, Ky.: Oct. 2 – 4, 2000 (includes Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota from McREL's region)

For registration information, contact: Continuing Education Registration, The University of Oklahoma, 1700 Asp Avenue, Room B-1, Norman, OK; (800) 522-0772, ext. 2248 or (405) 325-2248; register online at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/lasconferences

McREL conference to explore the power of accountability

World Café offers unique approach to school reform



Educators who attend McREL's fall conference October 18-20 in Denver will experience the power of conversation as a tool for change. This year's event features a World Café led by Myron Kellner-Rogers, internationally renowned expert in organizational change. Kellner-Rogers helps organizations access the intelligence that exists everywhere within them to create the capacity for continuous change. In a later session, participants will hear observations from other educators who have previously participated in the World Café.

The theme for this year's conference is *The Power of Accountability to Transform Teaching and Learning*. Drawing from café conversations and listening to thoughtful examinations of the research about measuring learning, participants will come away with broadened perspectives about responsibility and accountability for education.

Career educator Barbara Sizemore provides guidance on measuring achievement

In her presentation on accountability for educators, Dr. Barbara Sizemore, former dean of education at Chicago's DePaul University, will highlight the responsibilities of teachers and administrators for accelerating and elevating student achievement as measured by standardized tests. She also will examine concerns about equity that are emerging as states address accountability issues. A reaction panel of commissioners of education in the McREL region will immediately follow.

Ron Suskind tells compelling story about one young man's journey through America's educational system

Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Ron Suskind will inspire listeners with his true story of Cedric Jennings. While working at *The Wall Street Journal*, Suskind met and chronicled the experiences of Jennings, a black teenager at a troubled and violent Washington, D.C. public school. Jennings not only survived, but went on to attend Brown University. Suskind's storytelling is passionate and motivational as he relates the story of Jennings' struggles to escape the ghetto in pursuit of a better life. Jennings' odyssey is a reminder to communities throughout America that they are instrumental in forming the hopes or dashing the dreams of their youth. The role of the larger community cannot be overlooked as a key factor in educating our children.

Conference information and registration is available online at www.mcrel.org/conference or contact the McREL Conference Office at (303) 694-4728, ext. 33; fax (303) 694-4869. Early registration for the main conference is \$179.

Work force study reveals importance of soft skills

by Paula Wenger

There's no way schools can educate 100 percent of the students for 100 percent of the jobs out there,"

observed Jim Edwards, vice president of the



McREL Board member Jim Edwards believes business has an important role to play in education.

Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and McREL board member, "but there is a common need for the basics." Edwards pointed out that for employers the basics include qualities such as responsibility,

dedication, and the ability to work with teams as part of a diverse work force—qualities termed as "soft skills," but essential for businesses to prosper.

These are the 1999 findings of the Work Force Task Force, established to inform KCCI educational policy. The business basics identified by the Task Force are qualities now emphasized in character education (see lead article), a trend also supported by Sanford N. McDonnell, chairman emeritus of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation, who has asserted, "There isn't a more critical issue in education today."

For six months, KCCI Task Force members—who represent business, government, and education—met with human resource specialists and educators to determine business needs and student skills. The Task Force also looked at studies conducted by

businesses or state economic development agencies.

Although the Task Force identified basics such as math, science, and reading, every survey or study they encountered listed "soft skills" among the top five or ten needs.

Other Task Force findings include

- Post-secondary schools need to be more market-driven;
- Parents and educators need to recognize vocational opportunities—many that pay well—provided through technical schools and community colleges; and
- In business, the greatest force is the speed of change; the greatest educational need is retraining.

What is the implication for public schools? Emphasizing soft skills prepares students for job demands and ongoing change.

Task Force findings suggest to Edwards that, "businesses can play a role in education by communicating their needs regarding workforce skills to public schools." On the other hand, Edwards recognizes that K-12 educators are not always receptive if business people seem uninformed. "If business people want to help education," Edwards asserted, "they should begin by sitting in a classroom for a day, to see what teachers really do—and not just in the best classrooms with the best students." This would be a good first step toward bridging the gap between the world of business and the public schools.

For further information on the KCCI workforce study, contact Jim Edwards at (785) 357-6321 or e-mail kccije@kansaschamber.org

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deliver staff development, including graduate credit courses, and curriculum to program participants.

For more information, contact Curt Eriksmoen, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, (701) 231-6062.

◆ The Kansas Character Education Program being piloted at 41 sites across the state is reaching almost 94,000 students. The \$250,000 grant was awarded to the Kansas State Department of Education, Wichita Public Schools, and the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center. First year goals are to reduce discipline problems, improve school climate, and increase positive attitudes by focusing on respect, responsibility, citizenship, and caring.

For more information, contact Phyllis Kelly, Kansas State Department of Education, (785) 296-3069.

◆ This spring, the Nebraska Department of Education was awarded \$183,183 in partnership with the Nebraska 4-H. The Department will revise a longtime state statute that encourages character education to make it more applicable to today's classroom and show schools the connection between

character education and the state's standards.

For more information, contact John LeFeber, Nebraska Department of Education, (402) 471-2449.

Creating an atmosphere of respect

Many of the districts or schools that have integrated character education into their culture and curriculum are showing positive results. Some successes cited by CEP include improvements in academic achievement, behavior, school culture, peer interaction, and parental involvement. As noted by CEP's Schaeffer, "Character education creates schools where children feel safe—not because a guard is posted at the door or they may have to pass through a metal detector—but because they are in an atmosphere that values respect, responsibility, and compassion." In the wake of the 1999 Columbine tragedy in Colorado and other widely publicized episodes of school violence, perhaps it's not surprising that many communities are embracing this movement.

See sidebar on page 3 for a brief list of resources. For more information on CEP, call (800) 988-8081.

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